Universal Religion.

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TRUTHS FOR THE TIMES.*

Francis E. Abbot, Ph.D.

RELIGION.

Religion is the effort of Man to perfect himself in all his relations.

The root of religion is universal human nature.

Historical religions are all one, in virtue of this one common root.

Historical religions are all different, in virtue of their different historical origin and development.

Every historical religion has thus two distinct elements,—one universal or spiritual, and the other special or historical.

The universal element is the same in all historical religions; the special element is peculiar in each of them.

The universal and the special elements are equally essential to the existence of an historical religion.

The unity of all religions must be sought in their universal element.

The peculiar character of each religion must be sought in its special element.

*Reprinted from "The Index" Vol. I, 1870.

CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity is the historical religion taught in the Christian Scriptures, and illustrated in the history of the Christian church. It is a religion in virtue of its universal element; it is the Christian religion in virtue of its special element.

The Christian Scriptures teach, from beginning to end, that "Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God,"—that is, the Hebrew Messiah. This, the Christian Confession, was declared both by Jesus and the apostles to be necessary to salvation or admission into the "kingdom of heaven."

The Christian church, from its origin to the present day, has everywhere planted itself on faith in the Christian Confession, as its divinely appointed foundation,—the eternal "rock" against which the "gates of hell shall never prevail."

The Christian Confession gradually created on the one hand the theology, and on the other hand the hierarchy, of the Roman Catholic church. The process was not, as is claimed, a corruption, but a natural and logical development.

The Church of Rome embodies Christianity in its most highly developed and perfect form, as a religion of authority based on the Christian Confession.

Protestantism is the gradual disintegration of Christianity, whether regarded theologically or ecclesiastically, under the influence of the free spirit of protest against authority.

"Liberal Christianity,"—that is, democratic autocracy in religion,—is the highest development of the free spirit of protest against authority which is possible within the Christian church. It is, at the same time, the lowest possible development of faith in the Christ,—a return to the Christian Confession in its crudest and least developed form.

Christianity is the religion of Christians, and all Christians are believers in the Christ.

The Christian name, whatever else it may include, necessarily includes faith in Jesus as the Christ of God. Any other use of the name is abuse of it. Under some interpretation or other, the Christian Confession is the boundary line of Christianity.

FREE RELIGION.

The Protestant Reformation was the birth of Free Religion,—the beginning of the religious protest against authority within the confines of the Christian Church.

The history of Protestantism is the history of the growth of Free Religion at the expense of the Christian Religion. As love of freedom increases, reverence for authority decreases.

The completion of the religious protest against authority must be the extinction of faith in the Christian Confession.

Free Religion is emancipation from the outward law, and voluntary obedience to the inward law.

The great faith or moving power of Free Religion is faith in Man as a progressive being.

The great ideal end of Free Religion is the perfection or complete development of Man,—the race serving the individual, the individual serving the race.

The great practical means of Free Religion is the integral, continuous and universal education of man.

The great law of Free Religion is the still, small voice of the private soul. The great peace of Free Religion is spiritual oneness with the infinite One.

Free Religion is the natural outcome of every historical religion—the final unity, therefore, towards which all historical religions slowly tend.

RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO FREE RELIGION.

Christianity is identical with Free Religion so far as its universal element is concerned,—antagonistic to it so far as its special element is concerned.

The corner-stone of Christianity is faith in the Christ. The corner-stone of Free Religion is faith in Human Nature.

The great institution of Christianity is the Christian church, the will of the Christ being its supreme law. The great institution of Free Religion is the coming Republic of the World, or Commonwealth of Man, the universal conscience and reason of mankind being its supreme organic law or constitution.

The fellowship of Christianity is limited by the Christian Confession; its brotherhood includes all subjects of the Christ

and excludes all others. The fellowship of Free Religion is universal and free; it proclaims the great Brotherhood of Man without limit or bound.

The practical work of Christianity is to Christianize the world,—to convert all souls to the Christ, and ensure their salvation from the wrath of God. The practical work of Free Religion is to humanize the world—to make the individual nobler here and now, and to convert the human race into a vast Co-operative Union devoted to universal ends.

The spiritual ideal of Christianity is the suppression of self and perfect imitation of Jesus the Christ. The spiritual ideal of Free Religion is the free development of self, and the harmonious education of all its powers to the highest possible degree.

Christianity is the faith of the soul's childhood; Free Religion is the faith of the soul's manhood. In the gradual growth of mankind out of Christianity into Free Religion, lies the only hope of the spiritual perfection of the individual and the spiritual unity of the race.

SINCERITY NEEDED IN PULPIT AND PEW.*

Alfred W. Martin.

There is a widely prevailing impression that the modern church lacks sincerity, that the church is not altogether honest with itself or with the world. Take, as an illustration of this fact, the request of the layman in one of the popular novels (which always reflect public opinion more adequately than anything else) for a frank statement of his rector's views on certain doctrines. The layman asks him to state what he believes, not as a minister, but as a man. He says he knows already what the rector is expected to believe but bids him set all this aside and tell what, as a man, his views really are. Another illustration. Quite recently a lady connected with a fashionable church of this city, asked me to call upon her that she might ask certain questions, knowing me to be free-

*The main portion of a discourse spoken before the Seattle and Tacoma Societies, Dec. 10th, 1905, written after delivery.

minded and independent. "If I go to my own minister," she said, "he will tell me what the church believes and what he, as a minister of it, ought to believe; beyond that he will tell me nothing."

Again,—a Unitarian minister, at the time of my graduation from the Harvard Divinity School, advised me to distinguish cautiously between what I thought in my study and what I gave the congregation from my pulpit on Sundays, else I might be compelled to resign.

Once more. The story is told of a man in Italy who asked the priest if he really believed the religion of the country. The priest replied, "Oh no! but we have to go slowly on account of the people; they believe it." And when the people were asked if they believed it, they said, "Oh, no, we are not such fools; but the priests believe it." These illustrations show there are just reasons for the prevailing impression that insincerity is abroad, that the need of intellectual honesty in the church is alarmingly great. But before I proceed let me put you on your guard against a possible misunderstanding of my motive and purpose in this discourse. Do not think that in any criticisms I make on ministers, churches, or religion, that I am antagonistic to these. On the contrary, I believe most profoundly in religion, in churches and in the ministry, so that if I criticize them, 'tis only because I wish to see them attain the highest of which they are capable. When General Miles criticizes certain features of army organization, no one fancies he is opposed to the army, or desires to see it abolished. His criticism comes directly from his patriotism, from his passion to see the army equal to achieving the utmost possible for the country it serves and protects. When Commissioner Harris finds fault with our system of public education no one imagines he desires to have our schools closed, for his criticisms are intended to help make the system more efficient and satisfactory. So also, in the same spirit and with a similar motive, would I have you interpret whatever criticism I may make upon the churches or their representatives. My desire is simply to see them rise to their magnificent opportunity as leading factors in the advancement of civilization. I believe the modern ministry capable of occupying the very vanguard of the world's

religious leadership and my criticisms are therefore made because I have these high hopes for it and this faith in the uplifting power of the church. While the honesty of thousands among the clergy and laity is not to be questioned in the least, yet it may fairly be doubted if there ever was a time when the need of sincerity in religion was greater than it is now. Just as the **social** conditions in ancient Greece raised chastity to the supreme place among the virtues most needed; just as the **political** conditions in ancient Rome gave pre-eminence to patriotism among the virtues to be practiced, so the **religious** conditions in modern Christendom are such as to make intellectual honesty a crowning grace of character. What are these conditions? On the one hand there exists a remarkable body of new and verified knowledge on theological and religious subjects, a group of ideas utterly at variance with the teaching of the established creeds, and on the other hand we see an immense body of lay people and clergymen, a large group of respectable and thoughtful men and women who admit the truth of the new ideas but who still retain connection with one or another of the churches that stand for those creeds.

What, I ask, does honesty require in the light of all this new knowledge?

Is it, for example, honest to publish the "Apostle's Creed" under that name, now that we know the apostles never uttered a word of it? Is it in accordance with the requirements of sincerity to use the apostles to give prestige and authority to the Episcopalian creed? Would not simple honesty call for at least a foot-note explaining that the name of the creed must not mislead the reader, that the apostles never heard any of its sentences or phrases; for not until four hundred years after their death did that creed assume its present form and become finally adopted as it now stands. Why claim to represent, or even seem to claim to represent, the belief of the apostles when they had nothing whatever to do with formulating that creed? I once asked an Episcopal bishop to tell me what the standard of faith and ritual of his church is. He answered, "The Prayer Book." According to this standard I have a right to expect him to teach the trinity and the miraculous birth of Jesus and many other doctrines, all taught in the Prayer Book.

When, therefore, I hear this bishop declaring that Jesus was simply "one of the sons of God," born "naturally, as other men were," I say he has no right to occupy an Episcopalian pulpit. Glad as I am that he has outgrown those old-time doctrines, I cannot rejoice when I see him solemnly reading the Prayer Book and thereafter state that he does not believe many of the teachings it contains. Honesty, it seems to me, would prescribe loyalty to the Prayer Book while one uses it, but if one has hold of truths that contradict its teachings, set the Prayer Book aside, leave the church that stands for those teachings and go where the newer teachings can be freely expressed and with honor.

Only last week a Presbyterian lady told me with great glee that her minister rejects the Westminster Confession and actually pronounced Calvinism **dead.** Is this a worthy cause for rejoicing when a minister repudiates the theological system he promised, when ordained, to preach? Can one respect a preacher who turns his back on the fundamental principles of his church and remains within her fellowship? Glad, indeed, may we be that this minister has made progress in theology, but there is something better even than progress, and that is sincerity. Moreover, no man ever makes real progress who is false to his ordination vows and disloyal to the creed to which his church was dedicated. When Dr. Donald S. Mackay, of the Dutch Reformed church in New York, at a banquet given to Mr. Carnegie said, "Men will be judged not by theology, but by religion, by the creed, 'do justly, love mercy, walk humbly.' " adding, "I know no man who does more to exemplify that creed than Mr. Carnegie;" when Dr. Mackey made that statement he deliberately repudiated the creed of his church and opened the door of salvation to a man who, according to the theory of Dr. Mackay's church, is hopelessly lost. For Mr. Carnegie does not accept any of the traditional, orthodox Christian teachings concerning God, Jesus, the future life and salvation. He is simply an agnostic. Dr. Mackay was, therefore, unwarranted in declaring him saved and certain of heaven, for the church which pays him to preach its tenets utterly discountenances the position taken in that speech.

Pray do not misunderstand me. For the man who holds the narrowest religious views I have unqualified respect if only he holds them with transparent sincerity; but how can one respect him who holds two contradictory positions simultaneously?

When we see the name "Baptist" over a church door we have a right to infer that the minister preaches immersion, and in the name of the trinity. But if we find him repudiating that rite and that formula, should we not think him a traitor? I see no escape from such a verdict. Yet there are prominent religious leaders who think differently, who openly countenance such procedure as I have cited, who deliberately advise radical ministers to stay in conservative churches and preach doctrines contrary to what is stated in the unrevised creeds, confessions, or other standards. So renowned a religious leader as Dr. Lyman Abbott, successor to the late Henry Ward Beecher, in an editorial written for "The Outlook" at the time of the famous McGiffert trial for heresy, counseled the following: "To every liberal minister in a conservative church we say: stay where you are and preach the truth as God gives you to see the truth, without fear, without favor." I disagree decisively and radically with this advice of Dr. Abbott. I hold that for a man to ignore the solemn vows of his ordination pledging himself to preach specific doctrines, is simply intellectual immorality, a violation of a binding contract, the repudiation of a sacred trust. I hold, moreover, that the practice of preaching one set of doctrines while officially and publicly committed to another, brings in its train spiritual decay and death. I admit that for very many people the creed of every Christian church has become a dead letter, yet there it still stands, unrevised, unrejected; an accredited criterion to all outsiders of what the church stands for, and without as much as a phrase to indicate that liberty of thought is allowed, that the right to change the creed is conceded when the progress of thought shall require it. Creeds were not made to be changed but to prevent change, to fix permanently and unalterably a particular body of belief. Surely if the creeds are dead it would be the part of simple propriety to bury them. Why keep them at all if their usefulness has gone and they can be honored

no more as they were at the time of their formation? Why bid ministers subscribe to them if they are not to teach them?

Again, I admit that many an "orthodox" congregation may be "perfectly satisfied" with their minister's liberality and the defections be so few as not to entail a closing of the church. Yet has a minister no obligation but to his congregation? Does he owe nothing to his God, to his own soul, to the world that has a right to know where he stands, especially in the light of the tremendous changes taking place in the realm of religious thought? Is there any moral principle whatever that can justify a minister in falling back on the moral laxness of his congregation as an atonement for his sin in staying where he does not honorably belong? When petitioned to try Dr. McGiffert for heresy the Presbyterian General Assembly took a noble, a magnificent stand, one that may well serve as a standard of conduct for all ministers who are ever in any doubt as to their duty to themselves, to their church and to the world. The assembly said to Dr. McGiffert: You know what the doctrines of the Presbyterian church are; if you hold different views we appeal to your sense of honor quietly to withdraw from our fellowship. Either comply with the requirements of honorable membership in our body or leave it. So to act is to be loyal to your own soul, to do the kindest thing to the Presbyterian church, and the most helpful thing for the world at large. Herein lies the ethics of the problem, the "ought" of sincerity.

Most assuredly would we have progress in religion but never at the price of sincerity. The final question for every liberal minister in a conservative church must be not, how much liberty can I expect and count on, but what does loyalty to truth require of me?

Greater by far than the success of any sect or church thereof, more imperative than any progress in religion is the need of sincerity, because the whole of human character is built on that rock.

MAN'S MORTALITY.

[Our esteemed subscriber, Mr. B. Barinds, has sent us this poem with the information that the original was found in an Irish MSS. in Trinity College, Dublin, and probably written by one of the primitive Christian bards in the reign of King Diarmid, about the year 554, and sung at the last grand assembly of kings, chieftains and bards, held in the famous Halls of Tara. The translation is by Dr. Donovan. —Ed.]

Like a damask rose you see,
Or like a blossom on a tree,
Or like the dainty flower in May,
Or like the morning to the day,
Or like the sun, or like the shade,
Or like the gourd which Jonah made;
Even such is man, whose thread is spun,
Drawn out and out, and so is done.
  The rose withers, the blossom blasteth,
  The flower fades, the morning hasteth,
  The sun sets, the shadow flies,
  The gourd consumes, the man—he dies.

Like the grass that's newly sprung,
Or like the tale that's new begun,
Or like the bird that's here today,
Or like the pearled dew in May,
Or like an hour, or like a span,
Or like the singing of the swan:
Even such is man, who lives by breath,
Is here, now there, in life and death.
  The grass withers, the tale is ended,
  The bird is flown, the dew's ascended,
  The hour is short, the span not long,
  The swan's near death, man's life is done.

Like to the bubble in the brook,
Or in a glass much like a look,
Or like the shuttle in a weaver's hand,
Or like the writing on the sand,
Or like a thought, or like a dream,

Or like the gliding of the stream;
Even such is man, who lives by breath,
Is here, now there, in life and death.
  The bubble's out, the look forgot,
  The shuttle's flung, the writing's blot,
  The thought is past, the dream is gone,
  The waters glide, man's life is done.

Like an arrow from a bow,
Or like a swift course of water flow,
Or like the time 'twixt flood and ebb,
Or like the spider's tender web,
Or like a race, or like a goal,
Or like the dealing of a dole;
Even such is man, whose brittle state
Is always subject unto fate.
  The arrow shot, the flood soon spent,
  The time no time, the web soon rent,
  The race soon run, the goal soon won,
  The dole soon dealt, man's life soon done.

Like to the lightning from the sky,
Or like a post that quick doth hie,
Or like a quaver in a song,
Or like a journey three days long,
Or like snow when summer's come,
Or like a pear, or like a plum;
Even such is man, who heaps up sorrow,
Lives but this day, and dies tomorrow.
  The lightning's past, the post must go,
  The song is short, the journey so,
  The pear doth rot, the plum doth fall,
  The snow dissolves, and so must all.

DO ANY OF FOLLOWING BOOKS APPEAL TO YOU?

Science and the Future Life.....*Jos. H. Hyslop*
The Wonders of Life.....*Ernst Haeckel*
The Widow's Mite.....*Dr. Funk*
Evolution and Its Relation to Religious Thought.. *LeConte*
The Power of Silence.....*Horatio Dresser*
Paths to Power.....*Floyd B. Wilson*
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EDITORIAL.

THE PREFIX CHRISTIAN.

Can it be fairly contended that love, justice, charity, goodness, truth, have in any sense more content by prefixing to them the word "Christian." Surely these moral qualities are larger and deeper without the limiting adjective than with it. The effort to make Christian justice and Christian love something different from or better than justice and love simply puts a stigma on the Christian name. When one says justice and love, one says all there is to be said, whether in Christendom or in heathendom, whether on earth or in heaven. There is a pronounced tendency manifest all the way from the Roman Catholic to the Unitarian to overwork the word Christian and to claim for Christianity a monopoly of spiritual theories or actions which can be matched with more or less completeness in other religions. Goodness was in the Vedas and in the "Avesta" centuries before the sermon on the mount was delivered. Justice and love are as much in the Jewish creed as in the Christian. Only by theological not by ethical differences can Christians be distinguished from Jews. Peter was a Christian not because he was good, but because he believed in the Messiahship of Jesus. A good man is something better than a Christian. Add anything to distilled water and you impair its purity. Adulterate goodness with theology and it loses something of its quality.

SPIRITUAL PROVINCIALISM.

Why single out the "Christ-spirit" and introduce the phrase into a test of religious fellowship? How is the spirit of Zoroaster, for instance, to be differentiated from that of Jesus so that one should seek to make the latter "dominant in one's life" rather than the former? Such selection seems to us unjustified and provincial in the light of the science of comparative religion which makes it increasingly apparent that the spirit of the great religious founders and teachers was one and the same, however much their particular teachings may differ.

If those liberal religious churches that would have their fellowship coterminous with that of Universal religion they must eliminate such limiting phrases from their "bond of union" and put in their place terms that are truly cosmopolitan and inclusive.

TRUTHS FOR THE TIMES.

Our readers will surely be impressed by the timeliness of the "truths" which we reprint from the "Index," published by our lamented Dr. Abbot thirty-five years ago in that "weekly organ of Free Religion" which he edited for ten successive years, doing in religion what Garrison, with his "Liberator," had done in politics. All the salient elements of Dr. Abbot's message have exceptional and permanent worth. In no better way, therefore, can we honor his memory and serve humanity than by helping give wider publicity to what received too limited recognition at the time because ahead of the time.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD.

TACOMA.

The Woman's Union held a very successful Christmas sale Dec. 2nd, and the few articles left unsold were disposed of at the monthly "Tea" Dec. 13th. **The Young Ladies' Alliance** met with Mrs. Martin Dec. 7th. Twenty-two were present and after the illustrated lecture-talk on "Holland" plans were discussed for the New Year's work. **The Boys' Fortnightly Club** contributed twenty dollars to the church music fund, the proceeds derived from renting their new stereopticon for Mr. Martin's illustrated lectures at the Music Hall.

Rev. J. A. Baldridge, of Port Angeles, Wash., formerly of the Unitarian denomination, preached December 24th.

SEATTLE.

"The Gospel of the Great Religions" is the title of a series of eight discourses to be given by Mr. Martin at the Sunday morning services of the society. The course will be repeated

Sunday evenings at Tacoma. In his printed announcement of this course Mr. Martin says: "The aim in dealing with the seven great extant religions will be positive and constructive, seeking in a reverent and sympathetic spirit to determine what permanent, helpful contributions each has made to the moral and religious life of the race."

"The Woman's Union" realized nearly $700.00 from their Christmas sale, enabling them to carry out their philanthropic work as planned at the beginning of the season.

The (Men's) Non-Sectarian Club held their regular monthly meeting at the Hotel Washington Dec. 13th. It was "Ladies' Night" and President Child in his opening remarks took occasion to make several graceful parallels between femininity and music, the address of the evening being on "Musical Celebrities Heard Abroad," by the organist of the society, Mr. F. W. Low. For an hour and a half Mr. Low entertained the assembly, giving a most vivid and pleasing account of his varied musical experiences. Mr. Darbey, of the Aeolian Company, illustrated the lecture by rendering a series of selections on a pianola kindly provided by the company. **The Junior Branch** to the number of seventy assembled at the morning service Dec. 24th, which was arranged specially for them. The sermonette was on the text, "He Went About Doing Good." Every scholar had brought a present to be given to some child at the Children's Home and at one o'clock a delegation from the Junior Branch carried the presents to the Home for distribution Christmas day. Wednesday evening the annual Christmas entertainment was held and proved to be the most delightful yet given.

The Co-operators with the City Charity Organization having Miss Isabel Mather as chairman carried out a variety of plans to gladden the season for the sick and the poor. In her annual report the secretary of the city organization paid a deserved tribute to the good work done by the co-operators.

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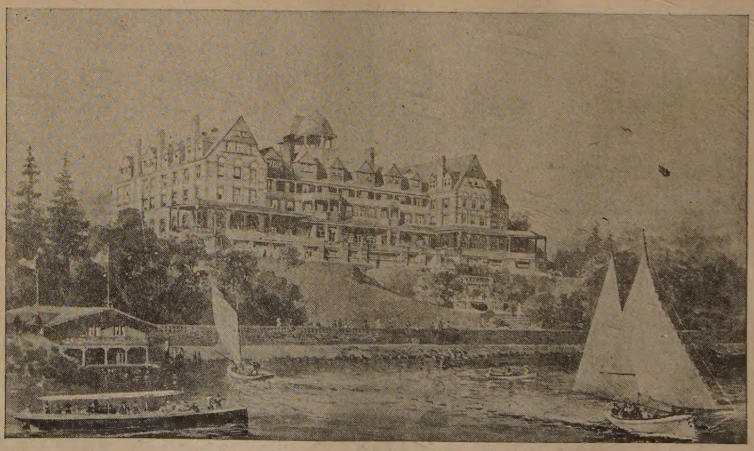

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